

# Virginia Board of Pharmacy

## Guide to Continuing Pharmacy Education Requirements

Since 1993, pharmacists who are licensed in Virginia have been required to obtain a minimum of 15 contact hours of continuing pharmacy education (CPE) per calendar year in order to maintain an active license. Pharmacy technicians are required to obtain a minimum of 5 contact hours of CPE per calendar year. This brochure is intended to help pharmacists and pharmacy technicians better understand the CPE requirements. The Board of Pharmacy prepared this document as a guide in order to promote compliance with the statutes and regulations concerning CPE.

**Q. What is the minimum number of CPE hours required? When do I have to take them?**

A. The law requires a minimum of 15 contact hours for pharmacists and 5 contact hours for pharmacy technicians per calendar year. You should receive all your certificates prior to sending in the license renewal in order to properly attest that you have met the requirements. The certificates should be dated between January 1 and December 31, inclusive, of the calendar year they are used.

**Q. Can I carry over my extra hours to next year? What if I'm licensed in another state?**

A. No. The law does not allow any carryover. Although some states permit courses to be taken over a two-year period, Virginia does not. This means a pharmacist licensed in Virginia must obtain at least 15 CPE hours each and every calendar year and technicians 5.

**Q. Can I get an extension?**

A. Yes. A one-time extension may be possible if the request is made in writing to the Board prior to renewal.

**Q. I obtained my license in Virginia earlier this year. Do I need CPE credits now to renew my license for next year?**

A. No for pharmacists. A pharmacist is exempted for the calendar year in which his or her license was first issued. CPE will be required beginning with the following calendar year. Yes for pharmacy technicians.

**Q. Do I have to obtain credits from any particular providers?**

A. Yes. In order to meet the CPE requirements, courses must be either ACPE approved, Board approved, or certain Category 1 CME. Any credits taken that do not meet these requirements cannot be used to satisfy CPE hours.

**Q. I've lost my certificates. What should I do?**

A. You should obtain a replacement from the course provider. ACPE approved providers must keep this information for at least five years. Some providers make it possible to print duplicates from their web sites.

**Q. Do I have to keep my certificates at work?**

A. No. However, the originals must be made available for audit.

**Q. I've taken a course near the end of the year and didn't get my certificate until the next calendar year. How are the hours applied?**

A. The date the certificate is issued controls unless it is a "live" course. Live courses are counted on the date of attending the course.

**Q. What should I do if the Board audits me?**

A. Whenever the Board contacts you, you should respond promptly. Failure to respond may cause the Board to pursue disciplinary action. If the Board audits your continuing pharmacy education credits, find your original certificates and make a copy for yourself. Send the originals to the Board office by the deadline in the letter. Although not required, you may want to send your response by certified mail so that you have proof of mailing. If you do not have enough credits for the year(s) in question, you may send an explanation to the Board with your certificates. Your explanation will be taken into account when the Board determines whether disciplinary action should be pursued. If you have lost some or all of your certificates, you should immediately contact the respective providers for a replacement certificate and inform the Board of your actions. Current Board guidelines state that for the first finding of insufficient CPE hours, it will offer a confidential consent agreement (CCA) wherein the CPE hours are made up and submitted with the signed CCA. Guidelines for subsequent findings of insufficient CPE call for a monetary penalty of \$100 for each missing hour of CPE, and \$300 for each renewal falsely attesting to CPE compliance.

**Q. What can I do to keep my records better organized?**

A. Here are some suggestions that may help you to keep your CPE records organized and avoid disciplinary action:

1. Store your original certificates in a safe place where they are unlikely to be thrown out by mistake.
2. Keep a copy of your certificates, or at least a record of the course number, provider and date, in a secondary safe location (not with the originals). These are a back-up if you lose the originals.
3. BEFORE YOU RENEW YOUR LICENSE, look at your original certificates and verify compliance with the CPE requirements:

15 contact hours for pharmacists or 5 for pharmacy technicians (some courses may carry a different number of credits for other professions)

ACPE approved (look for the logo), or Category 1 CME courses focused on pharmacy, pharmacology or drug therapy

each of your CPE certificates show a “date issued” on or prior to December 31 for the year in question.

**Note that it is your responsibility to maintain your CPE records for the current and two previous calendar years. You must complete the hours before you send in the licensure renewal.**